

# AMERICAN SCHOOLS OF ORIENTAL RESEARCH

## JERUSALEM AND BAGHDAD

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWSLETTER

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(This further report on the work of Miss Theresa Goell at Nimrud Dagħ will supplement that distributed in Newsletter #2, and serve to give Members and Friends a complete preliminary account of the undertaking. C.H.K.)

The season of the first rains has begun in earnest, and I now know why it is called son bahar or the last Spring in Turkish. Despite the zero temperature fresh grass is sprouting and the landscape is acquiring a tinge of green that was lacking in the summer season. All vegetation and the earth is washed and the contrast of fresh green and deep brown reminds one of Strabo and his attribution of "fertile" to Commagene. In a few days we shall be leaving this region of scenic beauty and archaeological surprises---everything is on a colossal scale. The ancient Commagenians must have been giants! In the matter of stamina and warmth of personality one cannot sniff at the modern Commagenians---they sing even in "thunder, lightning and in rain", nothing is too difficult for them, and they are masters in lifting stone and stone-masonry. They are afraid of nothing, and they carry on a perpetual feud with their neighboring villagers, making it necessary for us to be careful not to mix the personages of different villages in the same debris-removing operations. They sing and dance at the slightest provocation or pause, and many a bitter cold day, or sizzling hot one was gladdened by their singing and dancing during paidos.

On Thursday October 25 we seized the advent of a rainless and cloudless day to return to the summit of Nimrud Dagħ. We slept overnight half-way up, at Horik, where many of our workers live. On Friday morning we were awakened by an uproar of the wind---as though wild animals had been let loose. But ever optimistic, despite being considered "bir tahta eksit"---a board loose---which we already were considered in August, we set out with our mules and drivers and our accompanying "Swiss Guard" whom we trust implicitly, although we know how they deal with each other in the sensitive sphere of honor. We were taken by a short-cut!---which turn-out to mean that we, the humans and the animals climbed, up a practically vertical face of sharp rock of the western side of Nimrud Dagħ. To say that I "climbed" is wishful thinking. Actually it was a scramble on all fours. I had the impression that even Dr. Doerner who can be called a "human fly" when it comes to mountain-climbing, seemed a bit tuckered out when we finally reached the tomb. The sockets for the orthostats were filled with thick ice, the wind nearly lifted us off our feet. Our shelter had lost its roof---lifted by human hands, and our men were suggesting that we would die if we remained. Our wet wood-fire smoked until we were almost blind. It was obvious that the Courts of the tomb of Antiochus were not planned for winter services or festivals---but the hereditary ritual slaves had to remain probably to carry on. Reminiscing about the deep snow that Hamdy Bey reported and the hardships of Humann and Puchstein, and not wanting to be a "sissy", Dr. Doerner and I set to work. I am certain that we would have survived the night in our sleeping bags, but even our old-faithfuls refused to subject their beloved mules to such a speculation, and said they would return the next day from their villages. If it snowed overnight we would really be up against it. Reason

finally prevailed, and just as the sun was sinking at 4 P.M. we began our descent by foot, arriving in the moonlight at Horik where the mountaineers gave us a WARM welcome. We have now seen nearly all the faces of Nimrud except under snow. Nimrud is synonymous with evil or sinister in modern Turkish and the mountaineers are suspicious of him. Nothing could persuade our first bekçi (watchman) to stay when he heard the tumultuous rubble slipping in the night wind.

In reconsidering the work of this season's Preliminary Survey, for an evaluation of the finds and results, I would say that the discovery of the real purpose of the so-called Monumental Stairway on the East Court which served as a ritual accessory rather than means of access, takes precedence over the other results. The Upper steps (immediately at the bases of the colossal statues of Antiochus and his Gods) served as a tribune and monumental stepped platform. The lower steps turned out to be the platform with sockets to hold a continuous wall of colossal orthostats sculptured with reliefs, including a replica of the "horoscope" of Antiochus representing a lion with stars, as found on the West Terrace by previous explorers. The size of the extant orthostats, their decomposed condition, the lack of heavy lifting equipment and the severity of the late summer season combined to make the closer examination of the lower surfaces the task of a future campaign. The extant, but heavily damaged remains of the lion and eagle groups flanking the row of reliefs (which faced the "Stepped Altar" on the east edge of the Court), established the parallel between the West and East Courts with certainty, but at the same time made it clear that the East Court was the principal Court for the ritual service. The West Court, limited by its cramped area, included the accessories of the East Court, but the orthostat wall with reliefs of Antiochus and his Gods (which the ones on the East Court probably also represented) were consigned to an annex.

The lowest step (so-called) proved to be the extant top of a retaining wall at the base of the orthostat wall platform. Several courses totaling about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  meters in height still stand and provide an interesting and important example of Commagenian masonry.

A find which came to light on the very last day of clearance of the debris of the tumultuous obscuring the monument, was a row of stones with large flat tops, evidently offering tables standing in front of (to the east of) the wall of reliefs. They are situated directly south of the altar sunken into the living rock floor of the Court at the base of the monument. This altar is on the same axis with the colossal statue of Zeus, and did not stand on the stairway as reported by Humann and Puchstein.

The outlines and nature of the so-called stepped-altar of the East Court were also established. The fragment of an eastern retaining wall reported by Humann and Puchstein was located and followed up. The southern corner was cleared. It was ascertained that the retaining wall was a part of the altar, not separated from it by a passage. Its upper surface was a continuation of the lowest outer south and north side of a step which was connected with the western side. The four sides formed an ambulatory at the base of the altar which also had an access by means of a ramp or stairway up its west side. At the summit stood a lion and an eagle, and probably another statue. The remains of sandstone sculpture, not determined in subject matter, lie at the southern foot of the steps. Monumental approaches to the east and south sides of the court were located.

The Inscriptions at the bases of the colossal statues at the summit of the stepped-tribune and relief platform were dealt with by Dr. Friederich Karl Doerner. He also located extant fragments of the inscriptions on the backs of the orthostat wall which had suffered heavily since 1883 when it was last examined. He made a comparison of the inscriptions with Humann and Puchstein's publication "Reisen in Nordsyrien und Kleinasien" and will present his report on the epigraphy at a

later date. It is hoped that with proper technical treatment of the powdery fragments of reliefs still lying to the south of the south plinths of the East Court it will be possible to salvage additional inscribed material.

Reviewing the various features of the East Court in its relation to the tomb, one conclusion begins to take shape, namely, that on the summit of Nimrud Dagħ we have not only a mortuary monument, but one that probably preserves and includes the character of a High Place and a Temple to the Gods. We do not know so far of any temple in Commagene, nor do we know the nature of the temples for instance of Pontus which are alleged to have been situated on mountain-tops. But we probably are not far off the right track when we consider the temple hypothesis in investigating the religious aspects of the tomb of Antiochus. The total complex suggests that Antiochus did not create the type of structure with its ritual appurtenances himself, but pressed into service individual traditional features which he combined in this, his, unique monument. To what earlier ancestor we may trace his creation is as yet unknown, but there is nearly a certainty that the tomb of Mithridates the father of Antiochus found by Dr. Doerner in 1951, and cleared by him currently will throw further light on the subject.

This season's work being in the nature of a surface Survey and not an excavation proper, we were not permitted and also were not prepared to make a deep penetration of the mass of rubble of the tumulus to search for the tomb chamber of Antiochus, or whatever his final-resting place might have been. But, in clearing away the tumulus rubble that was piled up against the west faces of the inscribed laws and prescriptions for the maintenance of the ritual of Antiochus, in order to study and make copies, we were in a position to learn something about the nature of that part of the monument. The clearance we made to obtain access to the inscriptions revealed that the living-rock of Nimrud Dagħ formed the foundation for the bases of the colossal statues and their inscriptions. This living rock was levelled as a passage on the west side of the statues. However the constantly slipping rubble of the tumulus endangered life and ~~arm~~ limb and despite the weeks spent in constant clearance the progress was limited, due to the constant cascade of rubble from the settling shoulder of the section. No retaining wall was found, but the presence of large blocks of rubble at the foot of the tumulus suggested that a wall in the interior of the tumulus was being pushed down by the weight of the shifting tumulus. Only the use of mining equipment to shore up the mass and tunnel into the interior will make it possible to find the tomb without unnecessary risk of life. The inscriptions were reached by means of ramps or stairways from south and north and not from the so-called Monumental Stairway east of the colossal statues.

Other interesting results will be included in my final report when the photographs and plans will be available to clarify details. Despite the high winds that hampered us and the severe cold of the last weeks, we were able to make some rubber copies. Unfortunately the latex provided by the American Latex Company was unsatisfactory, about one quarter of each containing being hard, black, and precipitated. No amount of coaxing by heat according to the manufacturer's directions would persuade it to return to a workable state. However, we now know what the future demands and have some excellent copies of some of the great inscriptions. We also made some paper squeezes but were finally defeated by weather conditions in our efforts to make squeezes of the inscriptions of the Fortuna of Commagene and Apollo. But we made extensive photographs of all the inscriptions. Dr. Doerner worked very hard, risking his life indeed in climbing the sides of the slipping tumulus to get scale photographs. My brother worked with me and the men on latex copies, while I worked alone with the men on the paper squeezes, after the passage had been cleared to make the inscriptions accessible.

We have learned many lessons for the future, the foremost being that time and the



right season are necessities. We now have a fine group of trained men most of whom had never seen nor used picks and shovels before. We also know how we can work with an economy of time and funds so that henceforth we shall not be burdened with dead-weight in material and personnel.

I shall return to New York via Europe by the middle of November.

With all good wishes to the members of the American Schools,

Cordially yours,

Theresa Goell.